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SUBJECT: KOSOVO QUINT PARIS MINISTERIAL?; AHTISAARI'S VISIT
TO PARIS

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASON 1.4 (b) AND (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: FM Kouchner's Balkans advisor told us on June 19 that Kouchner views the Secretary's participation in his proposed Kosovo Quint Paris ministerial as absolutely essential. The Secretary would be able to engage directly with Italian FM D'Alema on the way forward. The meeting will probably be a working event without a press component. Ahtisaari told Kouchner June 18 that he did not want to continue as the lead negotiator if talks resumed during an agreed period of delay; the Quint should take the lead. FM Kouchner readily agreed with this proposal. In the interim, the MFA bureaucracy is plowing forward on how to craft an acceptable timeline, while strictly abiding by GOF policy of "inevitable independence." END SUMMARY

PROPOSED KOSOVO QUINT MINISTERIAL

2. (C) FM Kouchner's Balkans advisor, Isabelle Dumont, told us on June 19 that the Secretary's participation in the proposed June 25 Kosovo quint ministerial in Paris was "absolutely essential" to the Minister's concept of the meeting. Dumont said that the FM thought this was an excellent opportunity to follow up on G-8 Kosovo discussions, and that it was imperative that the talks take place at a political level, not among bureaucrats (referring to Political Directors). It would be a shame, she said, for the Quint ministers to be together and not take the time to talk about Kosovo at such a critical juncture.

3. (C) Dumont noted that the ministerial, which she predicted would not last more than an hour and should not include a press event, would presumably have two goals: (1) an agreed commitment by ministers that a UN Security Council resolution recognizing an independent Kosovo and implementing the Ahtisaari plan remained the preferred outcome, and (2) to provide an opportunity for Secretary Rice (and presumably others, though Dumont referred specifically to the Secretary) to convince Italian FM D'Alema that independence was inevitable and that it was time to seriously begin discussing how to move forward when (not if) plan A failed.

AHTISAARI'S JUNE 18 VISIT TO PARIS

4. (C) FM Kouchner had dinner with President Ahtisaari on June 18, Dumont told us. She explained that Ahtisaari was

adamant that the recommendations in his report to the UN remained the best way forward. While Ahtisaari did not seem to believe that additional negotiations would lead to an agreement, Dumont said that he did not oppose a delay in principle, as long as independence was the final outcome. That said, Dumont told us that Ahtisaari had no desire to lead new negotiations himself, and "was fed up" with the whole affair. She said that Ahtisaari advised Kouchner that the Quint should take the lead in mediating any future talks between the parties. Dumont noted that Kouchner strongly endorsed the idea of Quint ministers taking a more active role.

WHERE IS THE MFA ON KOSOVO?

15. (C) "Inevitable independence for Kosovo," Dumont said, was GOF policy. The key questions for the France were how and when to move forward on a timeline in the probable absence of a UNSCR. She said that the paper distributed on Friday to Quint Balkans' directors was interesting, but that the Quint needed to work more closely together. (Dumont was not prepared to discuss specifics of the paper.) She explained that she was 99.5 percent convinced that no agreement could be found between the parties, but that it could not entirely be ruled out. She did not deny that the absence or presence of the word "independence" was a deal breaker for both Serbs and Kosovars, nevertheless she held out hope that Belgrade could be convinced to be more forthcoming if given the right incentives. Dumont agreed that fixing a timeline, with certain independence at the end would put pressure on Serbia to negotiate seriously but added that it might mean Pristina would take a harder line and wait out the timeline. We made

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the point that while pressure might not exist for Pristina in the same way, Kosovar leaders had an obligation to negotiate in good faith because they understood they would need the international community to rally around them once Kosovo is recognized as independent. At one point, Dumont wondered if it might be better to leave Kosovars with the impression that independence was dependent on their willingness to negotiate in good faith. Poloff insisted that Kosovo had already made an acceptable effort and that leaving the question of independence even remotely open could be very destabilizing for the region; Dumont quickly responded it was only a thought.

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